

# CONTEMPORARY ART & IDENTITY

## An 9-12<sup>th</sup> Art1 Curriculum Unit



Art work by Salvador Sanchez – Class of 2014

**Overview:** What is *Identity*? How is our identity constructed within the various environments in which we live? This class will ask students to examine how they construct their own identities, as well as investigate the work of contemporary artists that deal with identity politics. Finally, students will create an artwork that makes a statement, or poses a question about their own identity.

**Aim:** Students will critically analyze the complexity of their own *identities* and begin to view *identity* itself as constructed by and within prisms of context. They will explore the many layers of identity, both group and individual: from racial, gender, age, class, and ethnicity to our consumer preferences our personal hopes, dreams and beliefs. Students will develop a working understanding of the *Post-Modern Principles of Art* as well as the common *Issues in Identity* focused on in Contemporary Art.

Understanding our *identity* and the ways we are identified is key to becoming empowered citizens and potential agents in the transformation of culture and the world.

**Grade Level:** 11-12

**Time Allowance:** 3-4 Weeks, 2 Hour Block Periods

**Standards:** CA VAPA 9-12 Proficient: 1.1, 2.6, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 5.2

## SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS

### Day One: Identity Mind-Map Artwork (Hybridity)

Create a conceptual map of your individual identity using mind-mapping and visual symbolism, and then develop this map into an art piece.

1. Create a mind-map of your multiple-identities.
2. Illustrate your mind-map with visual symbols and abstract expressive elements.

### Day Two: Color/Memory Self-Portrait (Representing)

How do your memories influence your identity? Students create a rough art piece in response to an in-class color/memory exercise designed by Kieth Sklar, NYU.

1. Use the *personal palette* you created in-class to choose your color scheme.
2. Create a rough artwork that represents a transformative personal memory or experiences.

### Days Three & Four: Internal/External Identity Sculptures (Layering)

How are you a different person to a stranger than you are to the people who know you best? Create a sculptural form with an inside and an outside. Illustrate your “surface level” identity on the exterior of your sculpture, and your internal “personal” identity on the inside.

1. Your artwork should reveal at least two distinct *layers* to your identity.
3. Draw inspiration from our conversations in class. How can your artwork represent the stereotypes, misconceptions and expectations that apply to your personal, gender, “racial,” cultural, sub-cultural, and national identities?

### Day 5: Issues in Identity In Contemporary Art

In small groups, analyze the artwork by one contemporary artist who deals with Identity. Identify the Issues in Identity as well as the Post-Modern Principles of Art that this artist uses in their work. Present your analysis of this artists work to the class.

### Day 6: Final Project Proposal & Sketches

Now that you’ve explored the complex structure of your identity, you should have a lot of information and material to work with in symbolically representing yourself in a work of art. Complete a project proposal & conceptual sketches for your final art piece.

- Propose three possible concepts for your final work.
- Create *two sketches* that illustrate how *each* concept could take form. (6 total sketches)
- Each proposal must be related at least one of the “Issues in Identity in Contemporary Art.”
- Each proposal must use at least one of the “Post-Modern Principles of Art.”
- Proposals will be reviewed and must be approved before you may begin your studio work. The teacher may ask you to revise your proposal several times.

### Final Art Piece: Studio Time (2 weeks)

After your project proposal is approved, you will have a clear direction for your final art piece. You will create an art piece *about* your identity. You can make a statement, or ask a question through your art piece.

1. Choose at least one “Issue in Identity” to focus on in your art piece.  
(Stereotypes, Gender Roles, Culture, Society, Family, Memory, Etc.)
2. Use at least one of the “Post-Modern Principles of Art”  
(Appropriation, Juxtaposition, Re-Contextualization, Layering, Representing, Hybridity)
3. Use the medium and materials of your choice. It can be figural or abstract. It can be any size, style, shape, and material that work for your ideas. 2D or 3D.
4. You will have *three weeks* of studio time to complete your project. The final art piece is your *masterpiece*, and should therefore demonstrate your mastery of the technical and conceptual art skills you have developed in this course.

### Artist Statement & Exhibition

Write an Artist Statement explaining the intention of your artwork. After our in-class critiques, we will have a public group art show. The entire school community, including your family and friends will be invited. Titles & artist statements will be printed and displayed with your artwork. You will have the option to display your work anonymously.

### **Resources/Bibliography:**

Olivia Gude – The Post Modern Principles of Art (Article)

Keith Sklar – Color & Memory (Lesson Plan)

Art21.org

### **Artwork By:**

Lyn Foulkes, Kerry James Marshall, Shadi Ghadirian, Fujiko Isomura, Sidney Goodman, Berni Searle, Louise Bourgeois, Song Dong, Mike Kelley, Nikki Lee, Robert Beck, Shazia Sikander, Larue Simmons, Cindy Sherman, Mark Newport, Laila Essaydi, James Luna, Tenmoyouya Hisashi, Luo Brothers, Enrique Chagoya, Do Hu Suh, Yinka Shonibare

